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Volunteers Need Screening and Training to Avoid Liability Risks, article in Health Care Risk Management quotes Henry Norwood , Esq., 2-2-2024

Volunteers serve many important roles in a hospital, but they can bring potential liability. A risk mitigation plan can help healthcare organizations make the most of volunteers without exposing themselves to undue risks.

Volunteers also can be subject to potential liability in some situations, but there are state and federal laws designed to protect volunteers in healthcare, says Henry Norwood, JD, an attorney with Kaufman Dolowich in San Francisco. States also have passed volunteer liability protection laws, including Good Samaritan laws, damage limitation laws, and charitable protection laws, similar to the VPA, Norwood says. Importantly, the VPA preempts any state law offering less protection to volunteers. States are permitted to grant volunteers more protection than the VPA, but states cannot provide less protection, he explains. The VPA does not apply to volunteers operating motor vehicles, Norwood notes. Many state law volunteer protection statutes also exclude protection for volunteers operating motor vehicles.

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